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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: SCENE SETTER FOR EU-LATIN AMERICAN AND CARRIBBEAN SUMMIT

Classified By: DCM Jane B. Fort for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) The EU-Latin American and Caribbean Summit convenes in Guadalajara, Mexico, May 27 - 29. 15 EU Heads of Government plan to attend a meeting the Irish hope will commit countries in the region to further social, economic and political development leading to expanded trade and better relations with the EU. Irish-led negotiations in Brussels have produced a draft Summit Declaration they hope will focus the region's relationship with the EU more on the social, economic, and political goals laid out in the Monterrey Consensus. Final stage Declaration negotiations move to Mexico next week in the run up to the Summit. EU strategists hope to secure eventual Latin and Caribbean bloc voting support for EU positions at the UN. End Summary.

CONTEXT OF THE SUMMIT

2. (C) Poloff spoke with Jonathan Conlon, of the Latin America office at the DFA, on May 19. He noted the Summit occurs against the backdrop of ongoing EU/MERCOSUR trade negotiations on an association agreement that the EU still hopes to conclude by October this year. The ambitions of the Central American and Andean regional groups, who are looking for similar agreements of association with the EU, will likely affect their moods and negotiating postures at the Summit.

3. (C) The Irish strongly prefer discussions to focus on issues directly affecting both regions rather than stray into global issues. However, global issues may well arise as they did at the last Summit in Madrid. This time around, these could include current events in Iraq and in the Middle East.

AGENDA

4. (U) The two-part agenda addresses "effective multilateralism" and "social cohesion."

-- Effective multilateralism --

5. (U) Earlier this month, Ireland failed to get the phrase "effective multilateralism" approved at the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial. Ministers refused to accept the word "effective." Ireland is hoping include "effective" in the Latin-Caribbean declaration.

6. (C) Ireland's draft addresses UN reform and EU/Latin American cooperation and coordination. Agreement on a position for UN reform is proving difficult within the EU with their varying positions on a range of issues, overshadowed by German and Italian vying for permanent seats on the Security Council, Conlon said.

7. (C) Significantly for the USG, Conlon revealed the EU hopes to find ways to capitalize on the strength of numbers from the blocs -- EU, Latins and Caribbean -- to sway UN negotiations their way. Poloff pointed out that G77 politics could hamper coordinated bloc voting. Conlon conceded this could happen but said it was worth starting the process to see how it would develop.

-- Social Cohesion --

8. (C) Regarding social cohesion issues, Ireland hopes to address well-known EU social, economic, and political objectives that will commit Latin and Caribbean countries further to self-financed reform and sustainable development.

9. (C) The EU wants to move countries further away from dependence on external aid and toward "full implementation of the Monterrey consensus," including taxing domestic wealth, generating local capital, and setting policies that should attract foreign direct investment, Conlon added.

10. (C) On the theme of "Social Cohesion," the Irish hope the Latins and Caribbeans will endorse themes including:

-- fighting corruption;

-- working to overcome political and economic inequality and discrimination on any grounds;

-- formulating national plans that address social exclusion, including eliminating the marginalization of indigenous people;

DECLARATION

11. (C) A Declaration, drafted by the Chairs and submitted to ministers/heads of government at the Summit, has been under negotiations in Brussels. These now move to Guadalajara for one last push next week before the Summit.

12. (C) Ireland's strategy is to set textual and political precedents for future association agreements between the EU and the Latins/Caribbeans. They seek a "shift of focus" to concentrate more on Monterrey Consensus goals and related social, political and economic standards.

13. (C) The Latin side is resisting somewhat. Conlon said that Argentina has been particularly difficult. Brazil began positively, but has recently cooled. Chile has been cooperative. Mexico, the host, is being helpful; President Fox reportedly sent a letter to his Latin counterparts last week laying out Mexico's hopes for the Declaration, but Conlon could not share its contents. The Caribbean nations, with significant interests divergent from the Latins, have been cooperative, especially toward British, Irish, and Dutch issues.

14. (C) Negotiations in Brussels hit snags recently that led the EU to speculate whether Latin and Caribbean negotiators were reflecting merely the wishes of foreign ministries or were factoring in social and economic ministries' points of view. Hoping to move things ahead, the EU demarched all capitals in Latin American and the Caribbean last week in the run up to the next round of negotiations in Guadalajara next week, Conlon said.

ATTENDEES AND FORMAT OF DISCUSSIONS

15. (C) The Irish expect 15 of the 25 EU heads of government to attend, including Germany's Chancellor Schroeder, France's President Chirac, Spain's PM Zapatero, Austria's Chancellor Schussel, Dutch PM Balkenende, and Swedish PM Persson, as well as representatives from the new EU 10 either at the Prime Minister or Foreign Minister level. Cuba is expected to attend, though it is not clear if Castro himself will travel, Conlon said.

16. (C) On May 27, Foreign Ministers will meet. On May 28, Heads of Government will meet in three groups of 20 each that will discuss the agenda and report back to a Plenary, where they will adopt the Declaration. On May 29, in addition to meeting with MERCOSUR, the EU plans troika meetings with the Central American group, Andean group, CARIFORUM, Mexico, and Chile.

COMMENT

17. (C) In addition to improved economic ties with Latin American/Caribbean region, the EU hopes association agreements, such as that planned with MERCOSUR and perhaps others, could lead to improved political clout at the UN and elsewhere. The EU's challenge will be to secure greater Latin American commitment to the ambitious targets of the Monterrey Consensus in exchange for greater access to EU markets and political support.

KENNY